

A Grounded Theory Approach to Understanding the Role of Medication Safety within a Hospital Early Discharge Team

H Smith¹, J Tomlinson^{1 2}, J Silcock², K Karban², A Blenkinsopp²

1. Medicines Management and Pharmacy Services, Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust 2. University of Bradford

Introduction

National priorities such as emergency department (ED) targets, increasing workload pressures in acute Trusts and social care and financial penalties for 30 day hospital readmissions have created a drive to facilitate safer early discharge. A Northern hospital's Early Discharge Team (EDT) of nurses and therapists (n=8) pro-actively supports the timely discharge of older patients from the ED and acute admissions wards. There is compelling evidence that EDTs are effective (Parsons et al., Age and Ageing 2018; 47: 288–294), however their role within medication safety has not been defined. This project aimed to explore the role of this EDT in supporting older patients with their medication.

Methods

EDT participants (n=5) were observed on sixteen occasions, allowing their 'real-time' medication assessment to be studied. In-depth interviews (n=4) gathered further insight into their lived experiences. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using a grounded theory approach. Health Research Authority approval was obtained.

Results

The EDT's core role with medication was found to support patient adherence in a person-centred way. Challenges to this process include having to make complex decisions in short timeframes and only ever obtaining a 'snapshot' of the patient. They work within a complex system that has numerous barriers and constraints that they must creatively work around to perform their role effectively. Despite these challenges, they support patient's adherence effectively by: knowing their patient; expertly navigating the system; flexing traditional role boundaries; having foresight; and working together.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first qualitative project exploring an EDT's role in medication safety. The EDT utilises advanced skills and an ability to adapt and flex within a challenging, complex system to efficiently support adherence. Other teams may benefit from capitalising on the identified factors. Further work must explore how these skills are adopted by new members of the EDT.